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RELIGION, *a Preſervative againſt Barbariſm and Anarchy.*

A

SERMON

From JEREMIAH, XIII. 16.

Preached at the *HAGUE*,

FEBRUARY 13th, 1793,

ON THE

Day of the GENERAL FAST.

BY

A. MACLAINE, D.D.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?
PSALM ii. 1.

LONDON:
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LAND.

HAGUE.

Your Lordship's approbation of the follo
ing Discourse, was an encouragement
me that it may have been useful; and the
of its publication, repeatedly expressed by
honoured friends, has at length engaged me t
ply with their wishes. Could I have
ed from the Examinations and Cross-
ions of the Witnesses, which I am
ed of, the Arguments and Conclusions
which I have

YOUR

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD AUCKLAND,

HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY
AND PLENIPOTENTIARY AT THE HAGUE.

MY LORD,

YOUR Lordſhip's approbation of the following Diſcourſe, was an unequivocal proof to me that it may have been uſeful; and the deſire of its publication, repeatedly expreſſed by many who heard it, has at length engaged me to comply with their wiſhes. Give me leave, MY LORD, to inſcribe it to your EXCELLENCY, as one of the ſignal and illuſtrious inſtruments of our deliverance from the calamities and dangers by which it was occaſioned; and accept, at the ſame time, of this homage, as a mark of the high reſpect and ſincere gratitude with which I am,

MY LORD,
Your Lordſhip's moſt obliged
and obedient Servant,

A. MACLAINE.

HAGUE,
April 17th, 1793.

This Day is publiſhed,

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AN ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, ANCIENT and MODERN, from the Birth of Chriſt to the Beginning of the preſent Century: in which the Riſe, Progreſs, and Variation of Church Power are conſidered in their Connection with the State of Learning and Philoſophy, and the political Hiſtory of Europe, during that Period. By the late learned JOHN LAWRENCE MOSHEIM, D. D. and Chancellor of the Univerſity of Gottingen. Tranſlated from the original Latin, and accompanied with Notes and chronological Tables, by ARCHIBALD MACLAINE, D. D.

Printed for T. CADELL, in the Strand.

A

SERMON, &c.

JEREMIAH, XIII. 16.

Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cauſe DARKNESS, *and before your feet* STUMBLE *on the dark mountains, and while ye look for* LIGHT, *he turn it into the ſhadow of* DEATH, *and make it groſs darkneſs.*

WE have never been called to the celebration of our annual and national Faſt under an aſpect of things ſo ominous and alarming as that which is preſented to us at this moment. A cloud (if I may uſe the metaphor of the text) has ariſen in our neighbourhood, loaded with calamity and deſtruction, and we need not enumerate the horrors that have already proceeded from its boſom; they are known to you in all their atrocity; and where is the heart that has not felt them with aſtoniſhment and anguiſh? The daily recital of them oppreſſes the heart;—piety is troubled at the view of them;—humanity weeps over them; and they are marked with ſuch ſtrange and dreadful characters of no-

 velty,

velty, that to deſcribe them farther, would only diſturb that calm ſpirit of pious recollection, contrition, and confidence, with which we ought to humble ourſelves, on this ſolemn day, before the throne of God.

This is ſurely a time to enter, like *Aſaph*, into the *ſanctuary* of the Divine Providence, which is the high refuge of the religious mind, amidſt the tumults and calamities of a tranſitory world. As the hand of the Moſt High is evidently ſtretched out to viſit the nations, let us hear the voice that calls us to *give glory* to him, before he permits the calamitous darkneſs of theſe unhappy times to extend to us, and to cover a country which has been long and often peculiarly diſtinguiſhed by his almighty protection.

The words of our text were addreſſed by the prophet to a people who had long continued ungrateful and impenitent, under the moſt ſignal mercies and the moſt ſolemn warnings of Providence. At length, however, the time approached when the *decree* was to *bring forth* and unfold its terrors. Jeremiah, divinely inſtructed to connect the fate of nations with the empire of Providence, had frequently admoniſhed the people of their danger, but in vain. They went on enjoying the calm ſeaſon of their proſperity with a lethargic ſecurity; and, not conſidering how ſoon a ſerene ſky might be overcaſt with clouds, they took no precautions againſt the evil day. In the mean time, the prophet ſaw the cloud ga-

thering which was to involve Jeruſalem in a fatal *darkneſs*, and he addreſſes to the people the ſolemn admonition of our text: *Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cauſe* DARKNESS, *and before your feet ſtumble on the dark mountains, and while you look for light, he turn it into the ſhadow of death, and make it groſs darkneſs.*

The ſcenes of confuſion and calamity, which were opening to this unhappy country, are here repreſented by expreſſive metaphors, which have a determinate ſenſe in the prophetic writings. *Darkneſs* is always uſed to denote great calamities; ſuch as war, famine, civil diſcords, and popular commotions: as *light*, on the contrary, is employed to ſignify peace, abundance, and other national bleſſings.—*Before your feet ſtumble upon the dark mountains* is a phraſe which repreſents, in a lively manner, a ſtate of perplexity, precipitation, and diſtreſs, occaſioned by the ſudden approach of danger or adverſity, againſt which national virtue and prudent foreſight had made no preparation. This was preciſely the ſtate of the Jews when they were ſurpriſed by a hoſtile invaſion. When the Babylonians arrived, their lethargy was awakened into aſtoniſhment and anxiety; their efforts were ill-directed and ineffectual; and, while they *ſought for light*, (*i. e.* for national ſafety,) *it was turned into darkneſs and the ſhadow of death.* After horrid ſcenes of carnage, in which the royal family was not ſpared, they were carried into captivity; and thus were verified the predictions of the prophets, which

had been regarded as vain declamation, by the minute philoſophers of the time, who, ſunk in an indolent ſenſuality, the foſtering parent of irreligion, and the mortal enemy of all public ſpirit, had been perpetually crying out, *the Lord ſhall do no good, neither ſhall he do evil.*

We would hope that the inhabitants of this republic neither reſemble the people to whom thoſe words were addreſſed in their moral ſtate, nor in the fate that awaited them in the diſpenſations of Providence. They are, nevertheleſs, ſo far applicable to our preſent circumſtances, as to furniſh the moſt ſolemn and ſalutary admonitions in this dark and critical period of time. In this point of view they preſent to our ſerious conſideration two important objects:

Firſt, A time of danger, in which trying ſcenes of calamity and darkneſs may be too juſtly apprehended.

Secondly, A ſolemn and national duty, to which this time of danger loudly calls us. *Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cauſe darkneſs, &c.*

I. *Firſt*, The preſent time is a time of danger, in which trying ſcenes of calamity and darkneſs may be juſtly apprehended. The awful events that alarm us on all ſides, are proper to diſpel all illuſion on this head, and they muſt naturally excite a painful ſenſibility in every heart.—There are *three* plagues which have for ſome time paſt been extending

tending their fatal influence through a conſiderable part of the continent; and they threaten the deſtruction of all ſocial order, all perſonal ſecurity and domeſtic comfort, all public and national felicity. They have been formed and foſtered, ſince the commencement of the preſent century, in the boſom of the moſt corrupt nation in Chriſtendom, and have now iſſued forth with combined fury; carrying deſolation and miſery wherever they come, and exciting painful anxiety wherever their approach is apprehended. And, as if the preſent period of time were to be marked with the ſtrangeſt characters of contradiction and abſurdity, theſe plagues derive their origin from the ſchools of a pretended philoſophy, whoſe imperious pedagogues ſet themſelves up as the lawgivers and dictators of the human race. And what are the plagues which this philoſophy has produced? Alas! the *tree is known by its fruits*, and its fruits are *a ſpirit of irreligion*, *a ſpirit of popular commotion*, and *a ſpirit of war and dominion*, exerted under the bloody maſk of a fantaſtic and ſpurious liberty.

1. The firſt fruit of this gloomy and dreadful philoſophy is a ſpirit of *irreligion*; and this, indeed, by diſengaging conſcience from the influence of all authority, human and divine, and letting looſe the rein to every irregular paſſion, gives a fatal nouriſhment to the other plagues now mentioned. But what muſt we think of a ſpirit of irreligion proceeding from *philoſophy!* This ſurely is a monſtrous production:

duction; it is a ſtrange and total inverſion of the order of things; it is, however, of a piece with the other unnatural productions of the day. In the times of Paganiſm the only true notions which were entertained concerning a Supreme Being and a ruling Providence were found in the ſchools of the philoſophers, and not in the colleges of the prieſts and augurs; and philoſophy was the only guide they had to religion and morals. And how would the ſages of *Athens* and *Rome* have ſtood aſtoniſhed, had it been predicted to them, that in the future and more enlightened ages of the world, and even under the advantages of a Divine Revelation, (which the moſt eminent of theſe Sages * almoſt foreſaw,) atheiſm and irreligion would one day be propagated under the name of philoſophy, and a *pantheon* of departed profligates (metamorphoſed into heroes and demi-gods) erected to inſult the divine religion of *Him* who was the *Light of the World?*

The article of *religion*, as a national as well as a perſonal concern, is the great object that ought principally to employ our meditations on this ſolemn day, when we preſent ourſelves before the Ruler of nations, to acknowledge his empire and to implore his protection. Religion is the *true* philoſophy of celeſtial wiſdom; it is the inſtructor, the guide, and the friend of man in all his relations, and in all the circumſtances of enjoyment or ſuffering in which he can be placed. To the individual it is a ſource of conſolation and an anchor

* Socrates.

of

of hope, amidſt all the tranſient tumults and diſorders of the world; and as it ſtrengthens all the bonds of ſocial order and moral virtue, it dignifies, ſtrengthens, and exalts a nation. Conſider with candour the ſpirit and tendency of the Goſpel of Jeſus; the character it is adapted to form in the true Chriſtian who embraces it in its genuine ſimplicity, diſengaged from the abuſes of ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm, and the influence that ſuch a character muſt have in promoting the beſt intereſts of civil ſociety. This divine Goſpel, you know, ſends its gentle but commanding power where human laws cannot reach, even into the ſecret receſſes of the heart; it connects the Chriſtian with God, as the creator, the benefactor, the ſaviour of men, the ſearcher of hearts, the aſſerter of right-couſneſs, and the judge of the world. It governs his ſentiments and affections as well as his conduct and actions, and engages him to be virtuous in his own eye as well as in the eyes of the world. It addreſſes its divine language equally to the higheſt and the loweſt in human ſociety; becauſe their eſſential intereſts, both in time and in eternity, are equally concerned in the inſtructions it adminiſters. It ſheds peace in the cottage of the peaſant; it forms the manners of the citizen to order and juſtice; it adds new dignity to ſovereignty, ſoftens ſubordination, and, after having promoted all the ſalutary ends of a wiſe and happy government here below, it prepares the temporary ſubjects of earthly empires for a kingdom of order, peace, and felicity, *which ſhall never be moved.*

And

And it is the ſalutary influence, it is the ſacred authority of *this* Goſpel, that a notorious confederacy has, for many years paſt, been endeavouring to undermine and deſtroy; firſt, in ſecret, by perfidious intrigues even in the cabinets of princes, and afterwards more openly by licentious publications, in which the imagination, deluded by vicious pleaſantry, and the paſſions, inflamed by every art of ſeduction, corrupted the judgment, and procured for ſophiſtry an eaſy acceſs, eſpecially to youthful and unexperienced minds.

But all attempts to extirpate or undermine by violence or ſophiſtry the diſpenſation of celeſtial truth and mercy, which has already triumphed over ſo many forms of oppoſition in the world, are as vain as they are impious. For *the foundation of God ſtandeth ſure* *, and neither the powers of darkneſs nor the rage of the wicked ſhall finally prevail againſt it. The time will come (and perhaps that time is not far off) when the moſt outrageous enemies of that Goſpel which God in his mercy has given to man as a ſource of redemption and a rule of life, ſhall be *broken aſunder*, and be diſperſed *like chaff before the wind*, for the inſtruction of the leſs guilty nations of the world.

In the mean time, are we in no danger from the poiſonous contagion of that *irreligious ſpirit* which has gained ſuch

* 2 Tim. ii. 19.

fatal

fatal ground in these latter days? Are there no ominous symptoms of it in the midst of us? These are important questions, and we cannot answer them without affliction. It is true, the inhabitants of this republic have been always deemed a religious people—and can they ever cease to be such, until they lose sight of their marvellous origin, and of the long series of providential wonders by which they have been sustained and preserved against the usual course of second causes, though by glorious instruments? For *what nation is there who have had God so nigh unto them as the Lord your God hath been to you in all things that you called upon him for* *? Ah! never lose sight of these things!—tell them to your children;—transmit them to your children's children, that they may keep alive that spirit of religion, and of religious fortitude, that animated your forefathers to such heroic deeds as will render your annals respectable and illustrious in all ages.

But though this nation has not, in the main, forfeited its religious character; though the number of those who know, by their inward peace and transporting hopes, what a happy thing it is to be a Christian, is far from being inconsiderable in this republic; though the edifying appearance of real devotion and pious recollection with which the solemn service of this day is performed, affords a comfortable presumption, that there are multitudes in this favoured land

* Deuteronomy, iv. 7.

who have adopted that memorable vow of Joshua—*As for me and my house we will serve the Lord*; yet it muſt be confeſſed, that there are many exceptions to lament on this head.—We do not affirm this from our own obſervation. It is the complaint of our ſovereigns, in the proclamation which aſſembles us at this time.—They complain of the increaſe of a cold indifference with reſpect to religion, and it is certain that religion has, in a great meaſure, loſt its influence on the minds of many, who have neither renounced the belief nor the profeſſion of Chriſtianity. It is to them neither a ſource of conſolation in affliction, nor a buckler againſt the temptations of proſperity, nor a rule of life and manners. It neither awakens their conſciences, nor reſtrains their irregular paſſions, nor betters their hearts, nor excites their zeal for the ſervice of that divine Redeemer who has called them out *of darkneſs into his marvellous light*, and whoſe ſervice is the moſt perfect freedom.—They complain of "a ſpirit of luxury and levity, which receives no "reſtraint even from the admonitions of an alarming Pro-"vidence." And is this complaint without foundation? It is true, our refinements in luxury are not carried to ſuch a length as they are in other nations, where fertile and extenſive territories furniſh with facility ſources of opulence, and nature ſheds her treaſures with a liberal and lavish hand. They are, however, gone far enough to threaten the rapid decline of a country where the parſimony of nature, in a ſmall territory, can only be compenſated by a ſober ſimplicity

of life and manners, and by laborious and perſevering induſtry; they are gone far enough to multiply thoſe imaginary wants which render the individuals of a nation *ſelfiſh*, and conſequently indiſpoſed to furniſh, from their opulence, a reſource to the public in time of need;—they are gone far enough to relax both our principles and our morals, and to produce among us (as they generally do in ſmaller ſtates) a decline of genius, talent, capacity, and public ſpirit.

And what a humiliating contraſt do theſe things make with the alarming circumſtances in which we are actually placed? In the moſt peaceable times theſe ſymptoms of national corruption ought to excite ſorrow and ſhame; but in *the day of darkneſs*, when the tempeſt is preparing its terrors all around us, they muſt wound every virtuous and feeling mind, and ſink the heart into diſcouragement and deſpondency.

We muſt not diſguiſe our moral ſtate, which has ſuch a momentous influence on our national conſiſtence, dignity, and proſperity. And it muſt be confeſſed that our moral ſtate has been gradually declining in many reſpects. That virtuous ſimplicity of manners; that maſculine and ſteady vigour of mind which diſtinguiſhed the men of ancient days, have undergone a viſible alteration in our times. It is, among other things, remarkable that we have been corrupted by that nation, which for above a century paſt has been the corrupter of Europe, and is now extravagantly attempt-

ing to involve it in barbarism and anarchy. Our young men resorted thither to finish their education and polish their manners, and too frequently returned with the infection of its infidelity, its luxury, and its vices. Thus that nation did us more real injury by their examples, their *philosophy*, and their modes, than they have ever done by their arms and their intrigues, though they sometimes invaded and laid waste our territories with hostile fury, and have often seduced us into labyrinths of perplexity and distress, under the mask of friendship. But that nation will corrupt us no more.—On the contrary, it holds forth to *us*, and to *all* the nations of the world, an example every way proper to terrify and instruct. It shews us in what the maxims of an impious philosophy, and the licentious frenzy of unprincipled *liberty*, terminate, by the complicated scenes of misery which they have exhibited to our observation; for, amidst the temporary success of its romantic exploits, we see all the branches of its prosperity blasted;—millions of its inhabitants, at home or in exile, involved in the horrors of carnage, famine, and despair, and all the symptoms of approaching ruin fermenting in its bosom.

Happy would it be for human nature and civil society, if the dreadful example of this infatuated people produced effects still more salutary than a preservative, merely, against their overgrown corruption! It is not enough to behold with horror the sanguinary spirit of *Anarchy* and *Barbarism*

to which irreligion and atheism open a full career, by removing the most respectable and powerful restraints which can be imposed upon the passions of men. Is not this calamitous example likewise adapted to change into zeal that cold indifference which often accompanies the external profession of Christianity? Ought it not to make us all perceive and feel, with new degrees of conviction and sensibility, the excellence and importance of that divine religion which is the vital principle of right conduct, social order, and true satisfaction in all our relations in *this* life, as well as in those which we hope to form or renew in a better?

2. The *second* plague which has proceeded from the pretended philosophy of certain reformers, and which renders the times *dark* and calamitous, is a spirit of popular commotion and intestine discord. This plague is often expressed in the sacred writings under the image of *darkness*, on account of the dismal and destructive confusion it produces. And if there ever was a time when this poison of public felicity ought to be the object of our most serious attention, it is in this hour of religious meditation, when we come to plead with the mercy of Heaven for the salvation of our country. We need not describe the horrid commotions and insurrections which the novel doctrines of these times have excited in a country at this moment perishing in convulsions under their fatal influence; nor need we mention the odious methods which that degraded nation has employed to stir up a spirit of in-

subordination

ſubordination and rebellion in all the countries of Europe, and even in more diſtant parts of the world. Their attempts have not been entirely unſucceſsful: for if they have totally *overturned* no government but their own, (whoſe deſpotiſm and corruption called, indeed, loudly for *reformation*,) they have diſturbed well-being, order, and tranquillity in many ſtates. Their doctrines and projects, when only promoted by ſophiſtry, intrigue, and pompous declamations on ſuch ambiguous words as *natural equality* and the *rights of men*, deluded many: but ſince violence and aſſaſſination have become the permanent ſupporters of their anarchy at home, and ſacrilege and plunder the inſtruments of its propagation abroad, the eyes of mankind begin to open: the ſpecious maſk that covered a peſtilential philoſophy is falling, and its *occult qualities* (if I may uſe that expreſſion) being known by their *fruits*, will come forth to view in their genuine colours, and will appear to be nothing more than the luſt of dominion and rapine, or, at beſt, the fanaticiſm of diſordered brains.

It is certain that popular tumults and inſurrections muſt be conſidered as the moſt fatal and criminal calamities that can afflict a country. In Scripture-hiſtory they are often mentioned as the deciſive marks of God's final judgments; they are even placed in the liſt of thoſe awful circumſtances that are to precede the diſſolution of the world. However that may be, they are, in the nature of things, when they become

become permanent and excessive convulsive symptoms of the ruin of a nation. In such an unnatural state of things, all laws and authority, human and divine, being reduced to contempt, the reins are let loose to every passion. A lawless multitude are set in motion, and the best members of society are at the mercy of the worst. No security remains for our persons or our property. All our social enjoyments are embittered, and all the comforts of our domestic relations become objects of terror, on account of the dangers which threaten them.

If such a spirit of disorder should arise in this peaceable and industrious country, merciful Heaven! what would become of us? We had painful symptoms of it some years ago, which fraternal charity would wish to forget, but which, in wisdom and prudence, we are obliged to recollect, that we may prevent their return, arm ourselves with the sacred principles of religion and virtue against the licentious maxims that produce them, and point out, as the enemies of human society and human felicity, the persons that would dare to renew our discords. Our late troubles were fomented and inflamed by the same unprincipled enemy who threatens us at present with unjust, unprovoked hostilities; and had they not been providentially suppressed, they would have involved us in calamities similar to those which have been produced in our neighbourhood by the fury of fanatical reformers and lawgivers. Even the progress they made was afflicting,

flicting, by its unhappy effects on our national ſtrength and reſources. We ſhall not enter into any farther detail concerning them, as all theſe things muſt be freſh in your memory. But we aſk,—Where is the virtuous citizen, whatever his political opinions may be, who would wiſh the return of ſuch times, to trouble the tranquillity and blaſt the proſperity of a country where the voice of the oppreſſor was never heard, where *every man ſitteth under his own vine and his own fig-tree* *, under the protection of a mild government and equal laws; with full ſecurity for his perſon and property, the freedom of his actions and opinions, and the unmoleſted enjoyment of all his ſocial and domeſtic comforts?

But theſe are not the only conſiderations that would render popular commotions criminal and odious at this time.—There is a circumſtance that would render them flagitious and treaſonable in a very high degree; and that is, the hoſtile ſtandard which, with equal treachery and violence, is raiſed to encourage and ſupport them. What! is it at the moment when a fierce and cruel enemy threatens to inſult us in the boſom of our profound and neutral tranquillity, that any would work to his hand by troubling our internal peace? In what light muſt we conſider ſuch as are capable of expecting with pleaſure, or beholding with indifference, theſe lawleſs invaders? Can we conſider them as Chriſtians? No; let not that ſacred, that benevolent denomination be

* Zechar. iii. 10.

defiled

defiled by its application to the fomenter of civil diſcord under a hoſtile ſtandard, under the protection of armed legions, who have renounced even the *profeſſion* of religion, as well as the laws of juſtice and humanity. Can we conſider them as *true* patriots? (a term whoſe proſtitution we deplore.) Surely there is no virtuous citizen, no true patriot, who, in a moment of cool and candid reflection, would be willing to ſacrifice the ineſtimable bleſſings and privileges we enjoy, to the purſuit of a ſpurious and chimerical liberty, which (whenever attempts have been made to introduce it) has produced nothing but diſorder and deſolation.

But though popular commotions and tumults deſerve to be conſidered as the greateſt of all temporal calamities, and render the times *dark* and *perilous* in the higheſt degree, yet there is another circumſtance which, as it is ſomewhat related to them, and ſometimes excites them, we cannot paſs over in ſilence. What I have here in view is a *violent* party-ſpirit, and a want of union among the heads and members of a nation, more eſpecially in the *proſpect of common danger*. We are ordered this day, by the ſovereign, to pray to God, the author of peace and the lover of concord, that he would be pleaſed to remove our diſcords and heal our diviſions. This emboldens us to touch that ſore, that dangerous wound, which feſters in the boſom of our national health and felicity. Diſcords and diviſions, even in peaceable times, retard the progreſs of national proſperity, parti-

cularly when they are nouriſhed by corrupt principles and ſelfiſh views: but in the period of danger, when the commonwealth is threatened by a foreign enemy, they are criminal and diſaſtrous in the extreme. In ſuch a caſe, it is only when the *mariners* join hearts and hands to *ride out the ſtorm*, that the public veſſel, which carries all that is dear to us as men and Chriſtians, can, with the ſuccours of the Almighty, be ſaved from ſhipwreck.

We have lately ſeen a noble and animating proof of this in the BRITISH ISLES. They are not without *their* portion of party-ſpirit and political diſſenſion. But when the proſpect of common danger called for their union; when they ſaw a plan, equally abſurd and portentous, formed by the diſtracted regicides of our day, to overturn thrones, to extirpate ſovereigns, and to propagate univerſal diſorder and anarchy; what happened? They forgot their diviſions; they ſuſpended the execution of unſeaſonable projects; they united, as in a phalanx, in ſupport of their liberty, their laws, their conſtitution, and their country, and (with few exceptions) roſe in one virtuous and majeſtic body, under the ſtandard of their pious monarch, to *play the man* for the ſalvation of their Iſrael and the *cities of their God* *.

And ſhall not we alſo forget *our* diviſions, the low attractions of partial views and ſeparate intereſts, while the

* 2 Samuel, x. 12.

enemies

enemies of Heaven and earth menace our peace, our conſtitution, and our independence? Where ſhall we find ſtrength, under the protection of Heaven, to ward off the evils that threaten us, but in united hearts and in united counſels? *Be ſtrong and ſtrengthen one another*, ſaid Samuel to the people of Iſrael, under the apprehenſion of common danger. This ſpirit of union (according to the words of the prophet) makes *a little one to become a thouſand, and a ſmall one a ſtrong nation* *, and ſhews that the Moſt High is in the midſt of a people, with a preſence of favour and protection. It was thus that your country has often been ſaved, even on the very brink of deſtruction, and ſaved by inſtruments (ſacred be their memory!) who had nothing to oppoſe to the formidable legions of the *Nebuchadnezars* and *Sennacheribs* of their day, but their patriotic union, their perſevering valour, and their truſt in Heaven. Let not then their deſcendants, in this hour of darkneſs, exhibit the diſmal ſpectacle of a diſcouraged and divided people. *We are deſtroyed*, if we *are divided*.—This is the motto which we find inſcribed on one of thoſe medals which mark the virtuous and heroic period of this republic, when union of counſels, efforts, and powers rendered its name great and reſpectable among the nations. This was the *old path*, the good *old way* †, in which your anceſtors walked, and in which they found *reſt* and *dignity* after their glorious labours.

* Iſaiah, lx. 22. † Jeremiah, vi. 16.

3. To the two plagues which we have been now conſidering, is added a *third*, which has for ſome time been ravaging the countries in our neighbourhood, and is at this moment approaching the territories of this republic. This plague is War, which is declared againſt us by the ſanguinary dictators of an infatuated people, whom Providence is permitting, for a time, to chaſtiſe *us*, before *they* periſh. It is declared, with a palpable but inſidious abſurdity, againſt the FIRST MEMBER of the republic, with a deſign to excite diviſions between the conſtituent branches of the union, and, under pretexts which profligacy can eaſily contrive, to render the whole community, and eſpecially its more opulent members, the objects of devaſtation and plunder.

And how ought we to be affected by this hoſtile invaſion? War, indeed, is a deplorable calamity. Conſidered in itſelf it is the reproach of nature and humanity; but conſidered as a diſpenſation of Providence, which permits the fury of the wicked to correct us by temporary ſhocks of adverſity, it may be ſalutary in its fruits. It may reſtore the dying flame of piety and public ſpirit, where it has been nearly extinguiſhed by luxurious eaſe: it may revive the vigour and energy of a people, and awaken them from that lethargy of ſentiment and principle, that is the ſlow but mortal diſeaſe of a country. Was it not adverſity, and more eſpecially the calamities of war, that formed to noble and virtuous deeds the illuſtrious founders of this republic; that turned the

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Belgic burghers into heroes, and ſhewed that ſuffering and trials were the ſeeds of national proſperity and grandeur? War, then, though deplorable in itſelf, may, through the direction of God's wiſe providence, terminate in a new and a better ſtate of things to this republic, and in time to come give ſtability to its peace, and render its conſtitution and independence ſtill more reſpectable. But this will depend on the pious improvement of our preſent critical ſituation, and on the bleſſing of the Almighty on our meaſures, our efforts, our arms, and thoſe of our allies.—Let us then *give* glory to the Lord our God, that he may not permit the *darkneſs* which approaches, to overwhelm us, nor our *feet* to *ſtumble*, through confuſion and perplexity, *on the dark mountains*, nor the *light* of deliverance, which we ſeek, to be turned into the *ſhadow of death* and *groſs darkneſs*. Let us, above all things, conſider theſe words of our text in the eſſential duties they require on our part; this is what we moſt earneſtly recommend to you in the concluſion of this diſcourſe.

II. This, indeed, is the great purpoſe of our preſent meeting. We come as a favoured, a ſinful, and an alarmed people, before the throne of our Benefactor and our Judge. And if we do not come before him with the ſentiments and diſpoſitions which this ſolemn and national act of religion ſuppoſes and requires; if we have nothing to preſent to him this day but our tranſgreſſions and omiſſions, and theſe neither accompanied with a generous compunction, nor with ſincere

ſincere and fervent reſolutions of amendment, to what will our ſolemn Faſt amount? Will it be an object of approbation in the eye of *Him* who is the *ſearcher of hearts*, and can only be pleaſed with ſincerity and truth in the *inward parts?* And if it be not the object of his approbation, will it recommend us to his protection in this critical period of danger and trial? *Bring no more vain oblations*, was his awful admonition to his ancient people; and does not the ſame voice addreſs itſelf to us? To ſuppoſe that the Supreme Being beholds with indifference the religious and moral characters of individuals and nations, is to fall into a kind of *atheiſm*, as impious and ſenſeleſs as that which all good men lament and abhor in a neighbouring people; for if the atheiſt denies His *exiſtence*, the impenitent tranſgreſſor denies, or at leaſt inſults, His government and His perfections; and without theſe what is His exiſtence?

Let us then this day, in the *firſt place*, give glory to God, by a pious acknowledgment of his ſupreme dominion. This is that rational and elevating act of religion which, by connecting the world with its Author, and all events, both in our public and private relations, with the righteous and beneficent government of their great Diſpoſer, opens to man the true ſources of conſolation, hope and moral improvement, in all the different ſcenes and viciſſitudes of human life.—In effect, what ſtrength and conſtancy of mind muſt the religious man, the virtuous citizen, receive from this habitual

bitual act of veneration and homage to that Sovereign Majesty that governs the world? It nourishes in his mind the full and happy persuasion, that neither his interests, nor the interests of his country, are at the disposal of *blind chance* or a *fatal necessity;* those *vain idols* which afford neither consolation nor help to man in the time of trouble. He sees them, on the contrary, placed in the hands of the Great Being who, during this probationary state, sends prosperity, that we may *rejoice* with gratitude in his benignity; and adversity, that we may *consider* our errors and our abuses, and be corrected by the discipline of his wisdom: and who, in the final result of things, will make all events, even those that are the most painful and afflicting, terminate in the happiness of his faithful servants.

Secondly, Let us give glory to the Lord our God by our *gratitude* and *contrition*. We join these two sentiments together, because we appear this day both as a favoured and a sinful nation before our offended Benefactor; and if we can recollect our past blessings, and the manner in which we have improved them, without ingenuous confusion and sorrow, we are certainly unworthy to appear in his presence. We had enjoyed during a long period (before our late troubles) the precious blessings of peace and true liberty, and saw the revolving years pass without any anxious or alarming apprehensions. But the blessings of Heaven lost their impression upon us by the very circumstance that ought to have ren-

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dered them affecting, even their long continuance; and they were neither improved to the advancement of our national ſtrength and happineſs, nor to enliven our gratitude and animate our obedience to the Rock of our Salvation. Even in this preſent moment of painful apprehenſion, the long-ſuffering patience of God has not withdrawn from us the precious marks of his favour and protection, and the actual poſſeſſion of many ineſtimable bleſſings, ſhews that his loving-kindneſs is unwilling to depart from us. Therefore let *all that is within us be ſtirred up to magnify his name*, before his mercies be withdrawn, and the *day of darkneſs* and calamity comes upon us. From the ingenuous compunction of contrite hearts, that ſincerely lament the abuſe of his gifts and the tranſgreſſion of his laws, let us ſend up up our penitential ſupplications to his throne of grace, that *he would not caſt us off for ever*, but be *the hope and the ſaviour of our Iſrael in the time of trouble, and in the midſt of deſerved wrath remember mercy.*

Laſtly, Let the effuſions of our gratitude and contrition be accompanied with *ſolemn vows and deliberate reſolutions of reformation and obedience.* This is the great purpoſe of our National Faſt; the ultimate end to which our acknowledgment of God's empire, gratitude for his mercies, and contrition for our ſins, directly point. This ſuppoſes and requires the candid review of our manifold tranſgreſſions, of our irregular paſſions, of our corrupt habits, of our falſe notions

of

of duty and happineſs, that, through the ſuccours of the great Sanctifier of minds, who *gives grace to the humble* and ſtrength to the feeble, we may combat and ſubdue thoſe mortal enemies both of our temporal and eternal felicity. Without this true ſpirit of reformation what ſolid foundation can we have for hope, amidſt the evils we ſuffer and the calamities which threaten us? If we ſeek for deliverance by means unaccompanied with piety and virtue, have we not too much reaſon to fear that the hand of the Moſt High will confound our devices, and make our unrighteous enemies his *ſcourge*, to afflict us grievouſly, before their iniquities turn finally upon themſelves, and accompliſh their perdition? And ſhould this be the caſe, what would we have to plead in our behalf in the day of our viſitation? We could only ſay to the Ruler of Nations, *Righteouſneſs belongeth unto thee, O God, but unto us ſhame and confuſion of face, to our rulers, to our princes, and to our fathers; becauſe we have ſinned againſt thee.* Let us adopt this ingenuous confeſſion; but let us not ſtop here. Let us ſound the depths of conſcience, and, examining our reſpective duties and obligations, let us adopt alſo the pious vow of Joſhua, and ſay, every one for himſelf, with an humble dependance on the Divine grace, *As for me and for my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* Did ſuch a reſolution crown the celebration of our ſolemn Faſt, then would we have nothing to fear. No: even under the ominous clouds that hang over our heads, we would have nothing to fear from the rage of man, and we would have every

thing to hope from the protection of God. For then might we look with unshaken confidence to the Supreme Disposer of all events, who is able to save *by many or by few*, and under whose direction the arrangement of things that seems the most unfavourable to our hopes may become the occasion of our deliverance. *O then that there were in us such a heart, that we would fear God and keep his commandments, that it might be well with us and with our children!* Amen.

THE END.